



Society of Environmental Journalists

P.O. Box 2492
Jenkintown PA 19046 USA
Phone: (215) 884-8174 • Fax: (215) 884-8175
sej@sej.org • www.sej.org

Board of Directors

President: Don Hopey
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Vice President, Programs
Jeffrey Burnside
KOMO-TV, Seattle

Vice President, Membership
Ashley Ahearn
KUOW-FM, Seattle

Treasurer: Carolyn Whetzel
Bloomberg BNA

Secretary: Peter Thomson
PRI's The World

Imelda Abano
BusinessMirror, Philippines

Peter Fairley
Freelance Journalist

Douglas Fischer
dailyclimate.org

Christy George
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Tom Henry
The Toledo Blade

Robert McClure
InvestigateWest

Jennifer Weeks
Independent Journalist

Roger Witherspoon
Freelance Journalist

Representative for Academic Membership: Tom Yulsman
University of Colorado

Representative for Associate Membership: Meaghan Parker
Woodrow Wilson Center

Founding President: Jim Detjen
Michigan State University

SEJournal Editor
A. Adam Glenn, *CUNY*

Executive Director
Beth Parke

March 9, 2013

Cynthia L. Quarterman, Administrator
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
phmsa.administrator@dot.gov

Re: News Media Access to Mayflower Spill Site and Information

Dear Administrator Quarterman:

The Society of Environmental Journalists strongly objects to the threatened arrest last Friday of a reporter at the ExxonMobil oil pipeline spill in Mayflower, Ark., and the failure of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation to take legally mandated leadership positions in dealing with reporters, establish an accessible command center that was not on oil company property, and implement a coherent information policy.

SEJ believes the EPA and the other federal agencies made a big mistake by allowing the command center to be set up on Exxon property, especially without establishing ground rules for journalist access to the center and spill area. With Exxon officials in control, journalists were not permitted access to the command center, its parking lot or the areas affected by the spill. Exxon's primary duty should have been the management of its oil flow, not the flow of information to the public.

We also object to the no-fly zone above the spill site which further restricted reporting of this incident that had broad public health and environmental interest.

SEJ is requesting that the agencies involved provide a written explanation of their actions regarding the threatened arrest, who was responsible for the media information policy driven by the company and the imposition of the no-fly zone. SEJ is also requesting that the agencies meet with its representatives to work out a more open and fair information policy for use in future emergency response situations.

Sincerely,

Beth Parke, Executive Director

Joseph A. Davis, Director,
SEJ Watchdog Project



*Strengthening the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media
to advance public understanding of environmental issues*